

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, I think I can give an assurance to my honourable friend concerning the first point, because my colleague the minister is very conscious of the need to consult with those who are likely to be affected by any changes that he makes; and I know that that consultation process is in full swing at the present time, as it should be. So I can assure my honourable friend that that is the case.

I have no information that would lead me to think that the government intends to transfer any of its functions to another jurisdiction; but if that should be the case, we will have to discuss it at the time. But I have no information on that at the present time.

Senator Marchand: Honourable senators, in providing me with further information at a later date, would the Leader of the Government comment upon the savings that are contemplated of \$200 million? That figure seems awfully high in terms of savings strictly from the administrative changes.

In turning over government authority and government programs to the native people, and to Indian band governments, there must also be adequate funding to go along with it in order that there can be an adequate level of programing.

I am very concerned that perhaps in this whole shift of government operation of programs to the native community there will be some attempt to make some large savings.

I plead with the Leader of the Government that we should not look at it in that manner. We need to spend more money on Indian communities in order that they may have a better life, in terms of economic development and education. We must not look at it in terms of saving a few dollars and ruining the lives of many of the native people.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Senator Roblin: Honourable senators, I should tell my honourable friend what I am sure he already appreciates, namely, that he is basing his questions on a series of newspaper reports which do not really reflect final government decisions or policies, and I am at a complete loss to know where the sum of \$200 million was pulled from. I certainly would not like to make any comment on that at the present time.

However, my honourable friend's point about making sure that whatever we do really is in the best interests of those whom we are trying to help, is a point that is well taken; and I undertake on his behalf to see that his remarks are brought to the attention of the minister.

Hon. Joyce Fairbairn: Honourable senators, on the same subject, I would point out that the articles in the press, as the Leader of the Government appreciates, cause a great deal of confusion and sometimes apprehension within the native community. Can the Leader of the Government send out today a signal reaffirming what the Minister of Indian Affairs told honourable senators in the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs last June when the committee was discussing Bill C-31 and there was a discussion on funding of native programs? At that time, Mr. Crombie stated categorically that there would be no cut in Indian programs. I

wonder if that could be reaffirmed today, to take the apprehension out of this current speculation in the press.

Senator Roblin: I think the leaders of the native groups in the country probably know more than the writer of the press report does about what is going on because they have been, and are being, consulted. It is very clear that consultations are proceeding with the representatives of the native peoples, so they know directly from those consultations what the situation is, and I think that is the best assurance that we can give them.

JUSTICE

CANADA COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON WAR CRIMINALS— SCOPE OF INQUIRY

Hon. Stanley Haidasz: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. I would like to ask whether he is aware that Canadian ethno-cultural organizations of Ukrainian and Baltic origins have asked the Minister of Justice to dissuade the Deschênes Commission from going to seek evidence in the U.S.S.R. and Poland in conducting the inquiry with respect to Nazi war criminals. I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate whether any representations have been made to him to dissuade the commission from going abroad in pursuit of this type of evidence.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): In the opinion of those who are interested in this matter, I do not seem to count because I have received no direct applications along the lines mentioned in my honourable friend's question. Personally, I think it would be extremely difficult for me to ask the Minister of Justice to interfere with the activities of the Deschênes Commission. After all, the commission was set up in order to bring as impartial a view as possible to the very serious problems that are before them and, in my opinion, it would not be appropriate for the government to attempt to direct their activities. We may have our views, but I think we must be patient.

It may be some comfort to my honourable friend to know that the commission has stated that there are only eight people out of the hundreds of names that they have been looking at who might be considered the subject of inquiry, should the commission go across the seas. I do not know whether they are going or not; that is not within my knowledge at the moment but, if they do, there are only eight people concerned.

I think it should also be recognized that even if these eight people are found to be worthy of further investigation—which is by no means clear—justice will be done in Canada by Canadians, and I hope that we can rely on that system to winnow out any false information, or misleading or intentionally disruptive evidence that might be presented elsewhere.

Senator Haidasz: I have a supplementary question. To further clarify this issue, would the Leader of the Government table in the Senate correspondence between these national ethno-cultural organizations and the Prime Minister, and any correspondence with the Minister of Justice?